

**Draft  
Environmental Assessment**

**Eden Bridge – Smith River State Park  
Host Site Improvement Project**



**September 2014**



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Host Site Improvement Project  
Draft Environmental Assessment  
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST**

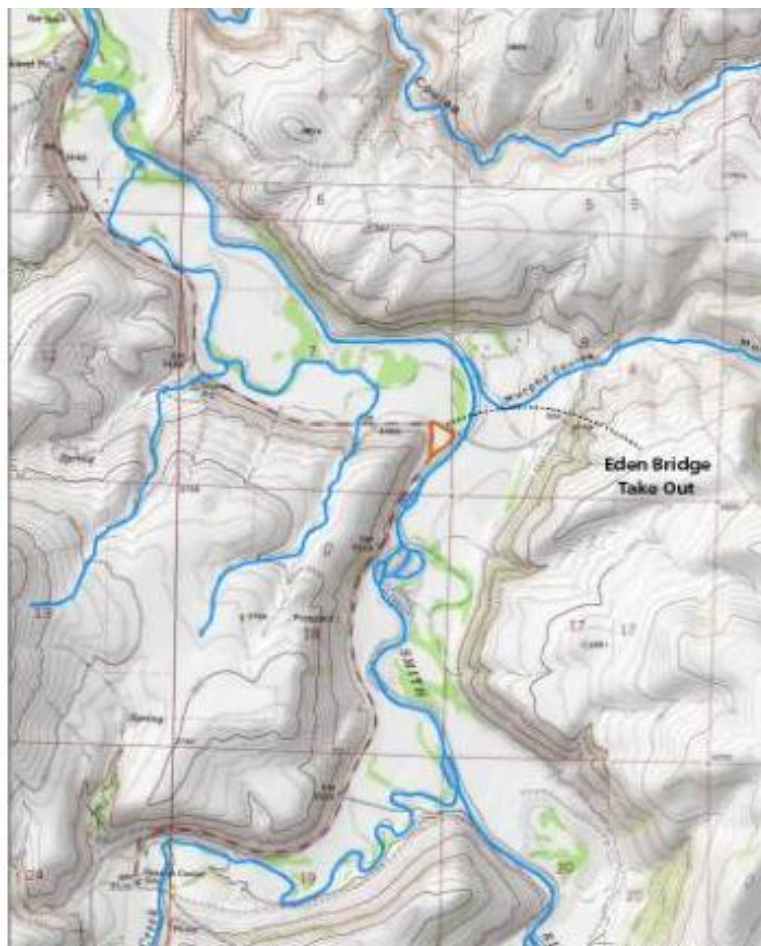
**PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION**

- 1. Type of proposed state action:**  
Montana State Parks (MSP), a division of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), proposes to improve the existing host site area, including the addition of two host pads with associated utilities at Eden Bridge – Smith River State Park. The project would consist of constructing two gravel pads for Recreational Vehicle (RV) parking, constructing gravel picnic areas adjacent to each gravel pad; installing two underground potable water cisterns, installing two underground septic tanks, constructing one septic drain field, relocating the existing phone and electric pedestal adjacent to each of the two host pads, relocating the existing storage shed to a new location behind the existing vault toilets, and relocating the entrance road to a safer location approximately 100' west of the current entrance.
- 2. Agency authority for the proposed action:**  
The 1939 Montana State Legislature passed MCA 23-1-101, which states that a State Park System would be established “for the purpose of conserving the scenic, historic, archeological, scientific and recreational resources of the state and providing for their use and enjoyment, thereby contributing to the cultural, recreational and economic life of the people and their health.” Montana statute 23-1-102 (4) gives MFWP “jurisdiction, custody and control of all state parks, recreational areas, public camping grounds, historical sites and monuments.”
- 3. Name of Project:**  
Eden Bridge – Smith River State Park Proposed Host Site Improvement Project
- 4. Project Sponsor:**  
Montana State Parks, Region 4  
4600 Giant Springs Road  
Great Falls, Montana 59405
- 5. Anticipated Schedule:**  
Estimated Public Comment Period: September-October 2014  
Estimated Decision Notice: October 2014  
Estimated Commencement Date: Fall 2014  
Estimated Completion Date: Fall 2014  
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 65%
- 6. Location affected by proposed action:**  
Eden Bridge is located in the northern portion of the Smith River State Park along the Smith River, approximately 17 miles southeast of Ulm, Montana on Highway 330 in Cascade County, Section 7, Township 17 North, Range 3 East (Figures 1 and 2).

**Figure 1. Smith River and Smith River State Park**



**Figure 2. Eden Bridge Topographic Map**



7. **Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u>.5</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	<u>0</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
Areas		Other	<u>0</u>

8. **Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.**

- (a) **Permits:** permits will be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permits</u>
Cascade County	Floodplain and Sanitation Permit
Cascade County	Approach

- (b) **Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana State Parks 2011 Bed Tax	\$17,000

- (c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
Cascade County Weed District	Weed Management Coordination
Montana Natural Heritage Program	Species of Concern
State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural and Historic Resources

9. **Narrative summary of the proposed action:**

The nationally known Smith River offers a unique experience for visitors from all across Montana and the United States. For those visitors fortunate enough to draw a float permit, the 59-mile Smith River float holds an unforgettable adventure, with striking scenery in a pristine location. The 121-mile Smith River begins near White Sulfur Springs, Montana where the North and South forks of the Smith River merge. For much of its course, the main stem of the Smith River runs through a broad valley between the Big Belt Mountains on the west and the Little Belt and Castle Mountains on the east. From Camp Baker, the upper public access point to the canyon, the Smith River carries floaters through a deep, rock-walled passage with outstanding natural beauty and family friendly recreational opportunities including floating, camping, fishing, photography, nature study and wildlife viewing.

The Smith River State Park and River Corridor has one public put-in point (Camp Baker) and one take-out point (Eden Bridge) for the entire 59-mile stretch. The river is accessible only by non-motorized watercraft, including rafts, canoes, kayaks, and drift boats. Approximately 5,000 people per year float the Smith River and complete their multi-day float trip at the Eden Bridge take-out.

**Proposed Action:**

During the peak float season of April through July, as many as 100 floaters per day launch watercraft at Camp Baker and take-out at Eden Bridge. Volunteer hosts have served the take-out site at Eden Bridge since the early 1990's. The host sites currently consist of one phone pedestal and one power box that is shared between the two sets of volunteers. Beginning in 2013, two 450-

gallon above ground water tanks were installed adjacent to each RV. However, prior to 2013, potable water was not available. Sewage storage is not currently available, requiring hosts to drive their RV's 50+ miles roundtrip into Great Falls to dispose of their sewage at an approved dump station.

In order to improve site security, public safety, and the ability to recruit and retain qualified volunteer hosts and to better serve the needs of both floaters and volunteer hosts, MSP proposes to improve the existing host sites at Eden Bridge to accommodate two recreational vehicles (RV's) and utilities for each host site. The proposed project would include: 1) construction of two gravel pads approximately 35 feet by 12 feet for RV parking; 2) construction of gravel picnic sites adjacent to the RV pads with fire rings and picnic tables; 3) installation of two underground water cisterns, one 1,500 gallon septic dose tank, and one 1,000 gallon septic tank; 4) construction of one septic drain field; 5) relocating the existing phone and electricity pedestals to be adjacent to each of the two host pads; 6) relocating the storage shed behind the vault toilets; and 7) moving the entrance road to a safer location approximately 100' west of the current entrance (see Figure 3).

### **Project Benefits**

The volunteer hosts at Eden Bridge perform a variety of duties in support of Smith River State Park including, but not limited to the following:

- Site security for 60 plus vehicles and trailers at a given time
- Assisting floaters exiting the river
- Collecting floater logs containing valuable user data.
- Documenting incidents (emergency, life threatening and non-life threatening, law and non-law enforcement, accidents, wildlife encounters etc.)
- Site maintenance (cleaning/stocking vault toilets, grass mowing, tree trimming, weed control, litter patrol, recycling, etc.)
- Traffic and parking control
- Information sharing with Parks staff (incidents, wildlife encounters, hazards etc.)
- Maintaining the lost and found program
- Managing Enterprise merchandise (selling Smith River T-Shirts and future merchandise)

Providing the basic amenities of stable and level parking pads as well as convenient and reliable electricity, water, sewer and phone will greatly enhance the ability to attract and maintain quality volunteer hosts for the long-term. This will ensure a high quality experience for floaters as well as non-floating visitors.



[illegible]

**10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:**

**Alternative A: No Action**

The current host site area would not be improved. Two sets of volunteer hosts would continue to share the one phone box and electrical box, utilize water from two above ground 450-gallon water tanks and be required to drive their RV's into the city of Great Falls to dispose of their sewage. Future attempts to recruit qualified volunteer hosts would be increasingly difficult due to substandard accommodations, resulting in a substandard level of customer service and reducing site security and public safety.

**Alternative B: Proposed Action**

This is the preferred alternative. The currently used host area would be improved, including constructing two gravel pads for RV parking; constructing a picnic area with table and fire ring adjacent to each gravel pad; installing two underground water cisterns and two underground septic tanks; constructing one septic drain field; relocating the existing phone and electricity pedestal adjacent to each host pad; relocating the storage shed; and moving the entrance road (Figure 3). Recruiting and retaining qualified, long-term volunteer hosts would be more likely with this alternative, resulting in a high level of customer service and site security.

**11. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**

MSP would employ FWP Best Management Practices (BMP), which are designed to reduce or eliminate sediment delivery to waterways during construction. MSP would develop the final design and specifications for the Proposed Action. All county, state and federal permits listed in Part I 8(a) above would be obtained by MSP as required. A private contractor selected through the State's contracting processes would complete the construction.

## PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

### A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				1a
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		Yes	1b
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				1d
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

- 1a. The Proposed Action would not affect existing soil patterns, structures, productivity, fertility, or instability. Soil and geologic substructure would remain stable during and after the proposed work.
- 1b. There would be some displacement and disruption of soil for construction of the RV pads and picnic areas; excavation to bury the septic tanks and water cisterns; construction of the septic drain field; relocation of the access road; and trenching to bury new electrical, water, and phone lines to the RV utility pedestal. Two gravel layers would also be added to serve as the host RV pads. These impacts would be minor and temporary. Once the project is completed, the impacted surface soil would be reseeded with native grasses and rehabilitated to prevent new erosion patterns from becoming established. Best Management Practices (BMP) would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize erosion (see Appendix C).
- 1c. No unique or physical features would be altered by the Proposed Action.
- 1d. Minor amounts of sediment could enter the river during construction of the RV pads and picnic areas, relocation of the access road, installation of the septic tanks and water cisterns, construction of the septic drain field, and installation of power, water, and phone lines to the host sites. However, upon completion, erosion and sedimentation to the river would be reduced.



2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		Yes	2a
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		Yes	2b
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations?		N/A				

- 2a. Dust may be temporarily generated during excavation and construction. However, this should only occur for a few days during the late fall or early spring months when no floaters are present and very few non-floaters are visiting the site. MSP would follow BMP's during all phases of construction to minimize risks and reduce dust. See Appendix C for the BMP's. There would be a temporary increase in diesel exhaust from equipment used during construction. If the Proposed Action were implemented, odors from diesel exhaust would dissipate rapidly. These impacts would be short term and minor. The nearest neighbors are located approximately ¼ mile to the northeast and ¼ mile to the northwest and should not be affected due to prevailing wind patterns.
- 2b. The buried septic tanks would be regularly maintained and pumped to prevent objectionable odors.

3. <u>WATER</u>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?			X		Yes	3h
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				

- 3h. The project would consist of burying two septic tanks and construction of a septic drain field, which would pose a minor risk in contamination of groundwater in the event that the tanks or drain field leaked. This risk would be mitigated with regular maintenance and inspection of the tanks and drain field. In addition, the tanks will be pumped when necessary to prevent overflow. All local and State codes would be followed and all necessary permits would be obtained.

4. <b><u>VEGETATION</u></b>  Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		Yes	4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				4b
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other:						

4a/4b. The Proposed Action would have no impact on the plant diversity or productivity of the project site and would have a minor impact on plant abundance. One Box Elder tree approximately 16 inches in diameter and approximately four Box Elder trees ranging from 6-10 inches in diameter would need to be removed to accommodate the gravel pad and picnic area nearest to the site entrance. The majority of surface area within the host pad footprint is currently void of grasses or shrubs, so there will be minimal disturbance. A concrete slab approximately 8 x 12 feet will be poured to serve as the foundation for the relocated storage building, which will disturb approximately 100 square feet of dry land grasses. The location for the septic drain field is currently primarily grasses. Because the construction area is small, impacts from construction would be minor. Once the project is complete disturbed areas will be reseeded with a native grass mix.

Construction of the RV pads, picnic areas and septic drain field, relocation of the access road and storage shed, and installation of the septic tanks, water cisterns, and power, water, and phone lines would disturb small areas which have been disturbed in the past by heavy public recreational use.

4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database found no vascular or non-vascular plants within the boundaries of Eden Bridge – Smith River State Park.

4e. Leafy spurge, houndstongue, and spotted knapweed are common noxious weeds found at Eden Bridge. Soils disturbed during construction could colonize with weeds. Areas disturbed by construction activities would be reseeded with a native reclamation seed mix where necessary to reduce the establishment of weeds. In conjunction with the Cascade County Weed District, MSP would continue implementing the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological, and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property. Weed management would include the establishment of native vegetation to prevent the spread of weeds. Vehicles would be restricted to the parking areas and access roads, which would be maintained as weed-free, and vehicles would not be allowed on undisturbed areas of the site to minimize the spread of noxious weeds.

5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				5a
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				5c
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		N/A				
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		N/A				

5a. The proposed project is designed to minimize impacts to wildlife habitat. Only a few trees would be removed for construction of the RV pad and picnic area near the access road. The proposed project site is not considered critical habitat for any fish or wildlife species.

5b/5c. There would be no deterioration of critical fish habitat. There is the possibility that the buried septic tank near the RV pads may end up within the 50-year flood plain layer. To mitigate the risk of contamination of the Smith River, the septic tanks will have regular maintenance and inspections and will be pumped as needed.

During the construction phase, changes in diversity or abundance of game species, including deer, elk, upland game birds, and waterfowl, would be non-existent and for nongame species, such as small mammals and birds, impacts would be minimal. Once the project is complete, long-term impacts to fish, game and non-game wildlife species are not anticipated.

5f/5h. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage database revealed no species of special concern in the vicinity of Eden Bridge – Smith River State Park.

## B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		Yes	6a
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?			X		Yes	6b
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

- 6a. There would be temporary increases in noise levels caused by heavy equipment during the construction phase. However, construction would occur during the late fall or early spring months when no floaters are present and very few non-floaters are visiting the site.
- 6b. The closest neighbors are located ¼ mile to the northeast and ¼ mile to the northwest and should hear little or no noise during construction. Noise levels would return to preexisting levels following construction.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?			X		Yes Positive	7a
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

- 7a. The proposed project will have a positive impact on the productivity of the site by improving circulatory patterns, better definition of the host area, relocating the storage building closer to the latrines, and improving safety by relocating the entrance road away from the congested host area.

<b>8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8a
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		Yes	8c
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				

8a. The project includes burying two septic tanks and constructing a septic drain field. Regular inspections and maintenance of the septic tanks will be conducted and the tanks will be pumped as needed.

8c. The project includes burying two septic tanks and constructing a septic drain field, which will pose a minor risk in contamination of groundwater and/or surface water, in the event that one of the tanks or drain field leaked or overflowed. This risk can be mitigated with regular maintenance and inspections of the tanks. In addition, the tanks will be pumped as needed to prevent overflow.

<b>9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				9c.
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				9d.
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				9e.

9c. The Proposed Action will improve recreational use of the area by improving customer service, site security, and public safety. This would benefit local retail and service businesses in Great Falls, Cascade, and Ulm (Appendix B - Tourism Report; 2010 Montana State Parks Economic Impacts Study).

9d. There would be no change in commercial use of the site.

9e. The Proposed Action would have a positive impact on potential traffic hazards. Moving the entrance station approximately 100 feet to the west will have a positive impact by decreasing noise and dust levels adjacent to the host pad, improving traffic flow within the site and providing a larger safety zone from vehicular traffic adjacent to the host pad.



<b>10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?			X		Yes	10c
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?			X		Yes	10d
e. Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. Define projected maintenance costs.			X		Yes	10f

- 10c. New electric and phone lines will be trenched to two pedestal boxes from the existing power and phone boxes. Linear distance of these utility lines from the existing boxes to the new location is between 30 to 50 feet, which is not considered to be a substantial alteration.
- 10d. There may be a minor increase in the use of electricity resulting from the operation of a high-pressure water pump to deliver water against gravity from the buried cisterns.
- 10f. Annual maintenance costs are anticipated to increase between \$150 to \$300 per year. This increase in maintenance costs is primarily associated with the regular maintenance of the gravel driveway and gravel host pad and picnic area as well as, maintenance and inspection of the two septic tanks and drain field.

11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		Yes Positive	11a
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X		Yes Positive	11c
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		N/A				

11a. The proposed project consists of improving a pre-existing host site area, so the resulting impact to the aesthetics of the site is likely to be positive.

11c. The proposed project will not impact the quantity of recreation and will likely improve the quality of recreational opportunities through improved customer service.

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic or paleontological importance?		X				12a
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				12b
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				12c
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance.		N/A				

12a,b, c. In accordance with the Montana Antiquities Act (22-3-421 to 22-3-442) and with FWPs ARM rules (12.8.501 to 12.8.10), a heritage resource survey was conducted by Sara Scott, Parks Division Heritage Resources Program Specialist, in 1999 for previous improvements within the current project area. No sites were identified within the area but an archaeological site with tipi rings (24CA0127) was identified outside the project boundary. The current project area is heavily disturbed by previous improvements and heavy recreational use. Based on the negative results of the previous survey and to past ground disturbing impacts to the area, no further cultural resource work is required.

If previously undetected archaeological sites are uncovered during project construction, in accordance with MCA 22-3-435, the State Historic Preservation Office will be contacted and steps will be taken to ensure the preservation of the archaeological site until a professional archaeologist can evaluate it.

## SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u>  Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		N/A				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

During construction of the proposed project, there will be minor and temporary impacts to the physical environment, but the impacts would be short-term and the improvements would benefit the recreational opportunities at Eden Bridge over the long-term. The Proposed Action would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long-term, the Proposed Action positively impacts the public's recreational use of the Smith River and the Smith River State Park and River Corridor, a nationally known and heavily used recreational river.

### **PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

During construction of the proposed project, there will be minor and temporary impacts to the physical environment, but the impacts would be short-term and the improvements would benefit the community and recreational opportunities over the long-term. The Proposed Action would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long-term, the Proposed Action positively impacts the public's recreational use of the Smith River and the Smith River State Park and River Corridor, a nationally known and heavily used recreational river.

The minor impacts to the environment that were identified in the previous section are small in scale and would not influence the overall environment of the immediate area. The natural environment would continue to provide habitat to transient and permanent wildlife species and would be open to the public for river access.

The Proposed Action would not impact the local wildlife species that frequent the property and the project would be designed to avoid conditions that stress wildlife populations. A search of the MNHP database found that no Montana Species of Concern have been observed within the vicinity of Eden Bridge.

The proposed project consists of improving the existing host site area at Eden Bridge, including: constructing two gravel RV pads with picnic areas, installing modern power and phone pedestals for each pad; installing underground two water cisterns and two septic tanks; constructing a septic drain field; relocating the current storage building from its existing location adjacent to the host site area to a location behind the vault toilet; and relocating the entrance road a short distance to the west.

Providing the basic amenities of level and stable RV pads as well as convenient and reliable electric, water, sewer and phone service will greatly enhance the ability to attract and maintain quality volunteer hosts for the long-term. This will ensure a high quality experience for floaters as well as non-floating visitors.

This analysis did not reveal any significant individual or cumulative impacts to the physical or human environment. All minor impacts identified in this analysis can be mitigated.

### **PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

#### **1. Public involvement:**

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: *Great Falls Tribune*, *Helena Independent Record*.
- One regional press release;
- Public notice on the Montana State Parks web page: [www.stateparks.mt.gov](http://www.stateparks.mt.gov)

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project. A copy of this EA will be posted on the Montana State Parks webpage [www.stateparks.mt.gov](http://www.stateparks.mt.gov) (Public Notices).

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

#### **2. Duration of comment period:**

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. October 15, 2014 and can be mailed or emailed to the address below:

Eden Bridge Host Site Improvement Comments

C/o Colin Maas, Park Manager, Smith River State Park  
4600 Giant Springs Rd  
Great Falls, MT 59405

Or emailed through the website [www.stateparks.mt.gov](http://www.stateparks.mt.gov) – click on “Public Notices”.

## **PART V. EA PREPARATION**

1. **Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?**  
No

**If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.** This environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts due to the proposed action, therefore an EIS is not necessary and an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

2. **Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:**

Colin Maas, Smith River State Park Manager  
4600 Giant Springs Rd  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
(406) 454-5857

Andrea Darling  
Darling Natural Resource Consulting  
39 Big Dipper Drive  
Montana City, MT 59634

3. **List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:**

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Parks Division

Heritage Resource Program

Operations Bureau

Fisheries Division

Wildlife Division

Design and Construction

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

## **APPENDICES**

- A. MCA 23-1-110 Project Qualification Checklist
- B. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
- C. Fish, Wildlife and Parks Best Management Practices

**APPENDIX A**  
23-1-110 MCA  
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

**Date:** September 07, 2014

**Person Reviewing:** Colin Maas

**Project Location:** Eden Bridge is located in the northern portion of the Smith River State Park along the Smith River, approximately 17 miles southeast of Ulm, Montana on Highway 330 in Cascade County, Section 7, Township 17 North, Range 3 East.

**Description of Proposed Work:** Improve the existing host site area.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check ☐ all that apply and comment as necessary.)

- [ ☐ ] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?  
Comments:
- [ ☐ ] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?  
Comments:
- [ ☒ ] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater? *Yes*  
Comments: *Excavation for two buried water cisterns and two buried septic tanks, construction of a septic drain field, and trenching and burying electrical and phone lines to two power pedestals.*
- [ ☐ ] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?  
Comments:
- [ ☐ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?  
Comments:
- [ ☐ ] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?  
Comments:
- [ ☐ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?  
Comments:
- [ ☐ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?  
Comments:
- [ ☐ ] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?  
Comments:
- [ ☐ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?  
Comments:

If any of the above are checked, 23-1-110 MCA rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.



## APPENDIX B

# TOURISM REPORT

### MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager  
Montana Office of Tourism-Department of Commerce  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601

**Project Name:** Eden Bridge – Smith River State Park Host Site Improvement Project

**Project Description:** Montana State Parks, a division of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, proposes to improve the existing host site area by constructing two gravel RV pads with adjacent picnic areas and utilities at Eden Bridge – Smith River State Park. The area will be used by two sets of volunteer hosts. It is expected that the hosts will assist floaters exiting the river; collect floater logs that document the visitors experience; perform site maintenance; and document incidents and be a contact point for emergency response.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?  
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?  
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

Signature Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager Date September 13, 2013

**APPENDIX C**  
**MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110**  
**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS**  
**BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

10-02-02

Updated May 1, 2008

**I. ROADS**

**A. Road Planning and location**

1. Minimize the number of roads constructed at the FAS through comprehensive road planning, recognizing foreseeable future uses.
  - a. Use existing roads, unless use of such roads would cause or aggravate an erosion problem.
2. Fit the road to the topography by locating roads on natural benches and following natural contours. Avoid long, steep road grades and narrow canyons.
3. Locate roads on stable geology, including well-drained soils and rock formations that tend to dip into the slope. Avoid slumps and slide-prone areas characterized by steep slopes, highly weathered bedrock, clay beds, concave slopes, hummocky topography, and rock layers that dip parallel to the slope. Avoid wet areas, including seeps, wetlands, wet meadows, and natural drainage channels.
4. Minimize the number of stream crossings.
  - a. Choose stable stream crossing sites. "Stable" refers to streambanks with erosion-resistant materials and in hydrologically safe spots.

**B. Road Design**

1. Design roads to the minimum standard necessary to accommodate anticipated use and equipment. The need for higher engineering standards can be alleviated through proper road-use management. "Standard" refers to road width.
2. Design roads to minimize disruption of natural drainage patterns. Vary road grades to reduce concentrated flow in road drainage ditches, culverts, and on fill slopes and road surfaces.

**C. Drainage from Road Surface**

1. Provide adequate drainage from the surface of all permanent and temporary roads. Use outsloped, insloped or crowned roads, installing proper drainage features. Space road drainage features so peak flow on road surface or in ditches will not exceed their capacity.
  - a. Outsloped roads provide means of dispersing water in a low-energy flow from the road surface. Outsloped roads are appropriate when fill slopes are stable, drainage will not flow directly into stream channels, and transportation safety can be met.
  - b. For insloped roads, plan ditch gradients steep enough, generally greater than 2%, but less than 8%, to prevent sediment deposition and ditch erosion. The steeper gradients may be suitable for more stable soils; use the lower gradients for less stable soils.
  - c. Design and install road surface drainage features at adequate spacing to control erosion; steeper gradients require more frequent drainage features. Properly constructed drain dips can be an economical method of road surface drainage. Construct drain dips deep enough into the sub-grade so that traffic will not obliterate them.
2. For ditch relief/culverts, construct stable catch basins at stable angles. Protect the inflow end of cross-drain culverts from plugging and armor if in erodible soil. Skewing ditch

relief culverts 20 to 30 degrees toward the inflow from the ditch will improve inlet efficiency.

3. Provide energy dissipators (rock piles, slash, log chunks, etc.) where necessary to reduce erosion at outlet of drainage features. Cross-drains, culverts, water bars, dips, and other drainage structures should not discharge onto erodible soils or fill slopes without outfall protection.
4. Route road drainage through adequate filtration zones, or other sediment-settling structures. Install road drainage features above stream crossings to route discharge into filtration zones before entering a stream.

D. Construction/Reconstruction

1. Stabilize erodible, exposed soils by seeding, compacting, riprapping, benching, mulching, or other suitable means.
2. At the toe of potentially erodible fill slopes, particularly near stream channels, pile slash in a row parallel to the road to trap sediment. When done concurrently with road construction, this is one method to effectively control sediment movement and it also provides an economical way of disposing of roadway slash. Limit the height, width and length of these “slash filter windrows” so not to impede wildlife movement. Sediment fabric fences or other methods may be used if effective.
3. Construct cut and fill slopes at stable angles to prevent sloughing and subsequent erosion.
4. Avoid incorporating potentially unstable woody debris in the fill portion of the road prism. Where possible, leave existing rooted trees or shrubs at the toe of the fill slope to stabilize the fill.
5. Place debris, overburden, and other waste materials associated with construction and maintenance activities in a location to avoid entry into streams. Include these waste areas in soil stabilization planning for the road.
6. When using existing roads, reconstruct only to the extent necessary to provide adequate drainage and safety; avoid disturbing stable road surfaces. Consider abandoning existing roads when their use would aggravate erosion.

E. Road Maintenance

1. Grade road surfaces only as often as necessary to maintain a stable running surface and to retain the original surface drainage.
2. Maintain erosion control features through periodic inspection and maintenance, including cleaning dips and cross-drains, repairing ditches, marking culvert inlets to aid in location, and clearing debris from culverts.
3. Avoid cutting the toe of cut slopes when grading roads, pulling ditches, or plowing snow.
4. Avoid using roads during wet periods if such use would likely damage the road drainage features. Consider gates, barricades or signs to limit use of roads during wet periods.

II. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES (parking areas, campsites, trails, ramps, restrooms)

A. Site Design

1. Design a site that best fits the topography, soil type, and stream character, while minimizing soil disturbance and economically accomplishing recreational objectives. Keep roads and parking lots at least 50 feet from water; if closer, mitigate with vegetative buffers as necessary.
2. Locate foot trails to avoid concentrating runoff and provide breaks in grade as needed. Locate trails and parking areas away from natural drainage systems and divert runoff to stable areas. Limit the grade of trails on unstable, saturated, highly erosive, or easily compacted soils

3. Scale the number of boat ramps, campsites, parking areas, bathroom facilities, etc. to be commensurate with existing and anticipated needs. Facilities should not invite such use that natural features will be degraded.
4. Provide adequate barriers to minimize off-road vehicle use

B. Maintenance: Soil Disturbance and Drainage

1. Maintenance operations minimize soil disturbance around parking lots, swimming areas and campsites, through proper placement and dispersal of such facilities or by reseeding disturbed ground. Drainage from such facilities should be promoted through proper grading.
2. Maintain adequate drainage for ramps by keeping side drains functional or by maintaining drainage of road surface above ramps or by crowning (on natural surfaces).
3. Maintain adequate drainage for trails. Use mitigating measures, such as water bars, wood chips, and grass seeding, to reduce erosion on trails.
4. When roads are abandoned during reconstruction or to implement site-control, they must be reseeded and provided with adequate drainage so that periodic maintenance is not required.

III. RAMPS AND STREAM CROSSINGS

A. Legal Requirements

1. Relevant permits must be obtained prior to building bridges across streams or boat ramps. Such permits include the SPA 124 permit, the COE 404 permit, and the DNRC Floodplain Development Permit.

B. Design Considerations

1. Placement of boat ramp should be such that boats can load and unload with out difficulty and the notch in the bank where the ramp was placed does not encourage bank erosion. Extensions of boat ramps beyond the natural bank can also encourage erosion.
2. Adjust the road grade or provide drainage features (e.g. rubber flaps) to reduce the concentration of road drainage to stream crossings and boat ramps. Direct drainage flow through an adequate filtration zone and away from the ramp or crossing through the use of gravel side-drains, crowning (on natural surfaces) or 30-degree angled grooves on concrete ramps.
3. Avoid unimproved stream crossings on permanent streams. On ephemeral streams, when a culvert or bridge is not feasible, locate drive-throughs on a stable, rocky portion of the stream channel.
4. Unimproved (non-concrete) ramps should only be used when the native soils are sufficiently gravelly or rocky to withstand the use at the site and to resist erosion.

C. Installation of Stream Crossings and Ramps

1. Minimize stream channel disturbances and related sediment problems during construction of road and installation of stream crossing structures. Do not place erodible material into stream channels. Remove stockpiled material from high water zones. Locate temporary construction bypass roads in locations where the stream course will have a minimal disturbance. Time the construction activities to protect fisheries and water quality.
2. Where ramps enter the stream channel, they should follow the natural streambed in order to avoid changing stream hydraulics and to optimize use of boat trailers.
3. Use culverts with a minimum diameter of 15 inches for permanent stream crossings and cross drains. Proper sizing of culverts may dictate a larger pipe and should be based on a 50-year flow recurrence interval. Install culverts to conform to the natural streambed and

slope on all perennial streams and on intermittent streams that support fish or that provide seasonal fish passage. Place culverts slightly below normal stream grade to avoid culvert outfall barriers. Do not alter stream channels upstream from culverts, unless necessary to protect fill or to prevent culvert blockage. Armor the inlet and/or outlet with rock or other suitable material where needed.

4. Prevent erosion of boat ramps and the affected streambank through proper placement (so as to not catch the stream current) and hardening (riprap or erosion resistant woody vegetation).
5. Maintain a 1-foot minimum cover for culverts 18-36 inches in diameter, and a cover of one-third diameter for larger culverts to prevent crushing by traffic.